

I commend Detective Burrow for his outstanding service to Great Falls and the State of Montana and wish him and the department continued success.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. PIN-GREE) laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 24, 2021.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on June 24, 2021, at 9:47 a.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 2184.

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

CHERYL L. JOHNSON,
Clerk.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable KEVIN MCCARTHY, Republican Leader:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 23, 2021.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to Section 104(c)(2)(C)-(D) of Title I, Division T of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Public Law 116-260), I am pleased to appoint the following Members to the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum Council:

Mrs. Jackie Walorski of Elkhart, Indiana

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Republican Leader.

EQUAL ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTION FOR VETERANS ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 486, I call up the bill (H.R. 239) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for limitations on copayments for contraception furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 486, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 239

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act".

SEC. 2. LIMITATION ON COPAYMENTS FOR CONTRACEPTION.

Section 1722A(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking "to pay" and all that follows through the period and inserting "to pay—"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

"(A) an amount in excess of the cost to the Secretary for medication described in paragraph (1); or

"(B) an amount for any contraceptive item for which coverage under health insurance coverage is required without the imposition of any cost-sharing requirement pursuant to section 2713(a)(4) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg-13(a)(4))."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs or their respective designees.

The gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 239.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this is not the first time I speak in favor of Representative BROWNLEY's bill, H.R. 239, the Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act, but I continue to advocate for this bill because it is an essential component of supporting the fastest-growing population of our Nation's heroes, our 2 million women veterans.

Last week, this bill was defeated on the suspension calendar when the Family Research Council mobilized efforts with my colleagues in the Freedom Caucus who suggested that the bill pushes a "harmful ideology." Distorting this debate into one about abortion, frankly, does not make any sense at all.

I again remind my colleagues that this legislation passed out of our committee with the support of Ranking Member BOST and through the House last Congress with the support of former Ranking Member Dr. Roe. I know that Dr. Roe is a fierce pro-life advocate, but as an OB/GYN, he understood the importance of access to contraception.

Let me be clear. This bill brings veterans' contraception coverage on par with care they received while on Active Duty from the Department of Defense and coverage required by private health insurance providers to all women in the United States since 2010—all women except those who seek care from the VA.

Now, this bill is about healthcare. This bill is about access. This bill is about equity, especially for our women veterans.

I thank Ranking Member BOST and Minority Leader MCCARTHY for their leadership in support of this bipartisan bill.

Simply put, a "no" vote today is saying directly to veterans that they deserve less healthcare than all other Americans. To me, the choice is easy. Vote "yes" on H.R. 239. We cannot permit veterans to be made second-class citizens.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 239, the Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act. This bill is sponsored by Congresswoman JULIA BROWNLEY. I thank her for introducing it.

The Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act passed the House last year with the support of the Trump administration.

It would eliminate copays for birth control at the VA healthcare system. In doing so, it would remove a barrier to care for women veterans. It would bring VA in line with the Department of Defense and the private sector. It would correct a fundamental unfairness that means women pay more for birth control at the VA than elsewhere. And it would not in any way contradict or undermine the prohibition against abortion and abortion counseling at the VA that already exists in law and regulation.

Women are the fastest-growing group of servicemembers and veterans. They are raising their right hands to serve this country in record numbers. Ensuring they are cared for as veterans is one of my top priorities as the lead Republican on the VA Committee.

We have made progress in making the VA safer and more welcome to women, but we still have a long way to go. Women veterans die by suicide at two times the rate as nonveteran women. Most of the veterans who die by suicide are not engaged in VA care at the time of their death. That is why connecting more veterans with the VA is key to stopping veteran suicide.

□ 1230

One of the primary ways we can connect more veterans with VA is by removing barriers that prevent them from seeking the care and benefits they have earned. This bill will help to do that.

Women seeking birth control in the private sector do not pay copays.

Women seeking birth control on Active Duty do not pay copays.

This bill will make it so women seeking birth control at VA do not pay copays either. That is all this bill does. Once again, that is all this bill does.

Why would we want a woman to pay more for birth control as a veteran than she did while on Active Duty?

Why would we want a woman to pay more for birth control at the VA than she would in the private sector?